Feathers and Frittery

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Zack, Cloud, Angeal Hewley, Zack Fair, Cloud Strife, Angeal, Genesis, Genesis Rhapsodos, Sephiroth, Cobalt (not my OC)

Additional Tags:
in which I make many assumptions of how thigns might happen, in the universe of another author, and I write fanfiction of fanfiction, because I have no life, unless it's being needlessly comedic at someone else's expense, AKA, Cobalt is a griffin, and is friendly, and cloud strife is a human, (supposedly), and is maybe NOT as friendly, but the universe doesn't seem to agree, cobalt is just a cute accidental OC ok??, and not even mine!, I usually hate OCs what is this shit lol!?!, seriously go read autumnalBelp's stuff, like right now, ... - Freeform, are you still reading this, GO RIGHT NOW

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Feathers and Frittery

by TyrantChimera

Summary

In which small happenstances add up to a very endearing, amusing, and confusing pile of feathers and fluff. There's Cloud Strife, a tame Griffin named Cobalt, and a bunch of SOLDIER first classes stuck as an unwilling audience to birdy shenanigans.

Surprise Giftfic for AutumnalBlep, in accordance with the "Thing with Feathers" 'verse.

Notes

In which I make some assumptions about things that may or may not happen, all in the name of fluffy shenanigans. Blame Cobalt. It's totally all his fault. And also blame Autumnalblep (happy random gift fic btw? I guess I can blame Christmas??) for writing such a fun little universe in "Thing with Feathers". Hope you don't mind me ranting about your stuff!

- Inspired by Thing With Feathers by FeatherLumina

I.

There was a trill like a chocobo. Angeal perked up before he vaguely recognized it as Zack's text tone. Zack apparently recognized it too, for he went searching through the over-large pockets of his SOLDIER issue cargo pants looking for his PHS. And then promptly looked at it oddly.

“Weird? Eh. Oh well.” He put it away.

Only then, the tone went again. Zack looked, again, baffled. And put it away again. There were no messages to respond to, it seemed, despite his phone going off.

An hour later, the tone sounded again. This time seemed business as usual, and soon Zack was happily texting his girlfriend back and forth, a chorus of text tones ringing gaily through the air every time she responded. Zack grinned more than a little goofily every time, lost his his own happy world as he 'chatted up his boo'. Genesis whuffed poutily, no doubt mortally offended by something so ridiculously cute and happy sounding existing within ten miles of his presence.

It sounded again. Zack looked at his PHS oddly. “Huh?”

Suddenly the sound wouldn't stop, even distorting slightly every other recitation. Zack gave his PHS a suspicious look, like a cat with a strange little critter it wasn't entirely sure wouldn't bite it first. “Okay, what in Hel's name...?”

Zack was so used to the sound coming from his phone that he completely missed when Genesis found the actual source of the chippy little tune. The redhead looked comically appalled, so much so that Angeal had to take his eyes off his apprentice as he literally inspected every inch of his apparently malfunctioning phone (although Angeal wasn't too sure how staring at the mini keyboard was going to help any).

Cobalt was sitting in the corner happily peeping, crest raised, singing along like only a happy bird could.

“Zack...” Angeal began.

Zack looked over, finally put two and two together to get the “fore” yelled by bad golfers, and stared at the quirky griffin with the same stoic incomprehension the rest of their nutty little household was

sporting. Cobalt finally realized he had an audience and stopped his singing. He puffed up his feathers a little, proudly waiting for his masters to respond.

Zack whistled his own text tone haltingly.

Cobalt perked up with a delighted trill, and whistled it right back. Repeatedly.

“That is adorable.” Zack stated, his voice a firm monotone.

“That is going to drive all of us up the wall!” Geneses creeled back in despair.

Two hours later, and he wasn't proven wrong...

II.

Cloud was, as they were quickly finding out, durable to some quite frankly ridiculous extremes.

Despite all efforts, he hadn't made SOLDIER. He was just a trooper, a regular human, as far as paperwork was concerned. And his peers that he'd abandoned back in Shinra. And probably his hometown, wherever that speck in the boonies was. As far as anyone else was concerned, he should just be a normal person, almost a civilian if not for some mild military training.

But out here, out in the wild, he was clearly not doing as he was supposed to do as a normal, almost civilian person. Namely, avoiding trouble. He was a magnet for it, if anything. Because of that they'd sent him to the high ground earlier, dodging along the precipitous peaks and thin cliffs above to play sentry, leaving the rest of them to trudge through the snow covered, monster infested regions not far below. (He was, of course, not notified that this was for his safety. They'd leave him that much of his pride, at least.) As a mountain boy, the high stone was no more danger to him than a meter wide boulder on a plain was to a mountain goat. He was proving his worth in that regards, if anything.

So of course, it came as a shock when he suddenly slammed into a snow bank out of nowhere, a large splash of white powder following him down from whatever the unimaginable height he'd managed to climb up to had been. The party stood ramrod straight in shock.

They'd just watched their comrade fall from a no doubt fatal height, with not so much as a scream to announce his sudden demise.

Only it wasn't his demise, because he soon got back up, huffing and growling as he brought himself to his feet. “Marlboro on the cliff,” he grunted out angrily, brushing off snow. And then he began climbing back up the mountainside.

Angeal gawked. “Uhm. What?”

“Marlboro on the cliff. Bastard knocked me off,” Cloud reiterated, throwing himself into the task of gaining height with all the aplomb of an actor who hasn't yet realized he's the comedy relief. There is revenge in his eyes and complete ignorance towards the blood slowly tricking from a cut on his arm.

Genesis finally stopped flapping his mouth like a fish out of water long enough to brew a response. “You just fell off a cliff,” he states simply. His elaborate nature had clearly left him this time around, but he'd at least managed to remind Cloud of what should have been a very pertinent fact to him. The fact that Cloud had just taken a fatal dive off a cliff, a dive that would have killed a normal person, and apparently hadn't noticed he was supposed to be dead.

Cloud just looked at Genesis, shrugged, and kept on climbing. “Wouldn't be the first time.”

The others stared at him, trying to make sense of things. Sephiroth just blinks, blindsided by all aspects of reality unanimously deciding that logic and reason were now boring and outdated. They all stare at Zack, because trying to get answers out the ludicrous kid who made no sense was not an action that made a lot of sense. But Zack, for all his chatty nature, could only shrug and look as flabbergasted as the rest of them.

“First, you find the only ancient left alive,” Genesis began, “then, SOLDIER Kunsel, who makes the Turks look blundering buffoons.” Genesis turns and gestures wildly at the cliff, “And now... this. This. Zack. I just. Zack.” Genesis was at a loss for words.

“I swear I don't know how I find these guys,” Zack pleads, clearly no better at the 'words and talking' thing than Genesis is right now.

All of them stare up the cliff. Cloud is already halfway back up.

“Er. Marlboro. Right. Un-enhanced trooper versus Marlboro.” Angeal

stutters, watching the blond go. He opens his wings and takes to the air.

“I pity the Marlboro,” Sephiroth quips.

III.

It's almost afternoon when Zack starts to get worried.

Cloud should have come back from his watch hours ago, in the wee hours of the morning. He asks the others and finds out that yes, he was spotted coming back into the shack they temporarily called 'home' as he swapped off sentry duty. Shinra was still after them, after all.

But that was it. The last time he'd been seen. Zack is in full blown, mounting terror mode as he searches endlessly for his little trooper buddy. He's not on the couch, because Cobalt has heartily stolen that and covered it with every lumpy pillow and blanket he could find and then some. There's no shock of blonde hair in the impromptu griffin nest, nor in the single bed, nor anywhere else around their hidey-hole. Even the others are starting to worry. A quick gaze around the old shack becomes a slew of worried faces and eyes darting about, trying to find the missing trooper. Genesis even starts an aerial search, the lazy circling overhead appearing almost relaxed if one didn't know better.

There was a fresh snowfall outside. No tracks. No trace. No clue as to where their friend had gone. They can't even yell for their youngest companion, the snow all too innocent looking despite the avalanche danger it belied. To say nothing of Shinra hearing them.

Through all of this worry and concern, Cobalt does nothing. And it's setting Zack off even more. Something feels off here, wrong. The griffin had grown surprisingly fond of Cloud in the short time they'd been acquainted, and yet he wasn't moving a muscle to help. The pale birdlion was watching everything attentively, but making no moves to assist with the search. If anything, Zack would have thought Cobalt would have been the one freaking out the most.

For some reason, perhaps the oddity of it, this angers him.

“All right, that's it. You're getting up and helping!” Zack growls, even as Angeal summons another pair of birds to search as well. They can't risk Genesis being spotted and putting the rest of them in danger as

well as Cloud, wherever the poor soul has gotten himself. Zack starts to shove the bird up, and is met with softly squawking resistance and a quiet temper. Zack gets buffeted away with a stern wing even as something gets rustled out from under a blanket. Zack stares at this object, struck a little dumb while his mind is turning at the novelty of being smacked about by a wing that isn't Genesis's.

It's a trooper helmet.

Cobalt squawks and hisses and hurriedly rolls the thing back under the covers, gathering it under his back legs like an egg as he coos comfortingly at it in a throaty little gurgle. Zack has never heard this vocalization before, and blinks before he realizes that it can only be a nesting noise. The other griffins stop dead, crests raising as they stare over at the impromptu nest attentively.

Zack looks down at Cobalt, the bird puffed up and annoyed and spreading himself as far as he can over the pile of old bedding and the two out of three remaining couch cushions he's shoved himself onto. Zack slowly, carefully, leans down and gently pulls some of the bedding aside, trying to peek right in the corner between the arm and back of the ancient seat.

Cobalt huffs and hisses and scolds, and paws him away from the person he's been sat on this entire time. It's Cloud. Zack backs up and covers his face, trying to hide the grin and choke down the monstrous laugh bubbling up in his throat, even as he takes out his PHS to capture the moment.

“I'll tell the others” Angeal states, and it's all the older male can do to make it out the door without bursting out in raucous mirth.

Cobalt dutifully noses the blankets back over Cloud's head, puffing up and settling back down on the boy even as Zack marvels at how small his little friend actually is. Awake, even though the blonde is soft-spoken, he has a presence you just can't seem to ignore. Asleep, it's not hard to realize how lean and small he is, especially not when he's been summarily shoved between the seat and back cushions of an old sofa by a somewhat confused, motherly griffin.

He must have curled up on the couch and fallen dead asleep, Zack thinks to himself, and Cobalt no doubt nudged him into the land of long-forgotten coins and lint before dumping every bunch of bedding he could find all over the kid. With how old and lumpy the old sofa was, it was actually no wonder they hadn't been able to find their

trooper once a pile of pillows and poultry decided to nest on top of him.

The others come back in the door, Angeal with a finger to his lips to shush the others as he gestures at Zack to show everyone where Cloud went. Zack obliges all too happily, and Cobalt is gently lifted aside just enough, the bird in a maternal bliss, for everyone to see the blonde's nose scrunched up in sleep.

Genesis actually squeaks a little, and shoving his grin into his fist only barely doesn't muffle it.

Zack gets pictures. The flash of his PHS isn't the only one, either.

Cloud huffs and flinches as the cold air and light hits his face. He blinks, waking slowly to find his limbs entrapped under ages old upholstery and feathers. He looks up at the others, confused. “Er. What?” He tries to raise his head, to see why the others are staring at him so intently, but Cobalt cries in shocked anger and shoves the blonde's head right back into the couch, smacking away Zack and shrieking at him in betrayal for waking his chick.

There's no more holding back the laughter. Everyone roars.

And even if both him and the bird wreak unholy retribution for the next week, Cloud never does manage to get them to delete the photos.

IV.

Cloud looks utterly appalled.

His appearance had been obvious for a while. The fluffy yellow locks, the wide blue eyes. It's an unspoken, unanimous pledge amongst the others that they do not mention The Hair. Or how he looks like a baby chicobo when he's surprised, glorious baby blues wide and framed by soft wisps of blonde. The brotherhood had voted, without any actual vote, to hold their tongues.

The chocobos they'd found near Icicle Inn held no such contract.

They cooed at him and preened the young trooper, shoved him under their wings, and kicked at a very much dismayed Cobalt. The poor griffin was batted aside. He wailed as they fussed. Zack stares down at the chocobo lure in his hands, shrugs, and pets the pouting griffin in

consolation.

“They look like good birds. The man at Icicle wasn't lying,” Angeal notes sagely.

Genesis smirks, addressing Cloud with a grin, “We've been blessed. This ought to make things much easier. There is no hate, only joy, for you are beloved by the goddess,” he says, his voice a musical lilt. Cloud catches his gaze in a glare that is entirely too terrible for his innocent, rounded face. Daring Genesis to continue his sentence. He does. “Truly, the goddess smiles upon you.”

“It doesn't count if she's laughing her ass off!” he barks back furiously. His anger is promptly ignored.

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